

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

February 2021 No.40

Dear All,

Welcome to the 40th Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

As we journey together into 2021 - let us think of those whose lives were turned upside down and inside out in the tumultuous year that was 2020. Help us to focus on the things that really matter and offer the best of ourselves and reflect on Stephanie Dowrick's words:

Compassion is the world's most perfect idea. But it comes to life only when we practise it. *Stephanie Dowrick*

As always please send us anything you would like included in Justice Updates. Your suggestions and comments both positive and negative or indeed any information that you would like to disseminate amongst the wider Edmund Rice Network - it is all much appreciated.

Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

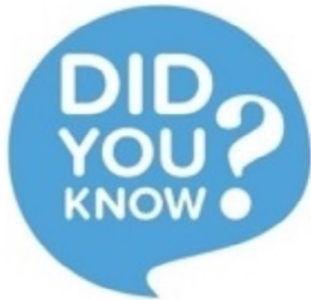
Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.



On Friday the 19th February 2021, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2744 days.



A Report entitled: '*COVID - 19 Rental Housing and Homelessness Impacts - An Initial Analysis*' released on 11th February by UNSW and the Australian Council of Social Service revealed some interesting results.

- Of the approximately 40,000 homeless people who had been provided with emergency accommodation between March & September 2020 only 32% were assisted into long term tenancies.
- Nearly half were former rough sleepers, and most of those who had been given emergency accommodation during the pandemic were no longer in those facilities. Nearly 8,000 had left their emergency accommodation by 30th September.
- On housing affordability, renters tended to be hit much harder by the pandemic than homeowners. Nationally, renter incomes fell by 5% March - June 2020, while housing costs fell by only 0.5%; mortgage

holders, by contrast, saw a 0.2% decline in incomes alongside a 5% decline in housing costs.

- At least a quarter of all private renters lost some income during the pandemic, but only a smaller minority got a rent variation from their landlord: between 8-16% of renters, depending on the data source. A similar proportion was refused a variation; more were discouraged from asking and more left their tenancy.
- Some 12% of private rental properties were subject to loan payment deferrals authorised by banks.
- Citing Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the researchers estimated that between 75,000 and 175,000 tenants across the country had been left with a rental debt.
- While median rents in parts of Melbourne and Sydney fell significantly, they had risen by 6% across non-metropolitan Victoria and by 5% in parts of regional NSW.
- In contrast with all four comparator countries, Australia's national government made no coordination or funding input to homelessness Emergency Accommodation programs.



My family's reckoning

It was time to face the difficult truth about my family who lived on stolen land.

Ellen Fanning, 6th February 2021, www.abc.net.au/news

I had been looking at the photo for about eight years.

Two dark-skinned Aboriginal women. A laughing girl and a stern-looking matriarch. Both dressed in starched white maid uniforms, like plantation workers from America's Deep South.

But this was the deep north — Longreach, Queensland, a century ago.

And the photo was in my late grandmother's ancient, black, leather-bound photo album, which I discovered in 2012.

Maria Koosney (standing) and Angelina McKenzie in the gardens of "Whitehill" Station, Longreach in 1920.

Who were these Aboriginal women? Why was their portrait on the very first page?

Did my great-grandfather have ... what? Slaves?

This is the story of how I found the answers to those questions, spurred on by the call for truth-telling as part of the Queensland Government's effort to make a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

It's about how I finally found the descendants of the laughing girl. And how together, we reckoned with the difficult truth of Australia's past.

Forced labour and total control

First things first. Those women were not sitting in the lush garden of that vast sheep station by choice.

Thirty-two years before that 1921 photograph was taken, the Queensland Government passed a law to establish total control over the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act systemically removed Indigenous Queenslanders from their traditional lands and confined them to missions and reserves, where they were generally forbidden from speaking their traditional languages or practising their traditional customs.

Far from offering protection to Indigenous communities, the 1897 Act saw men, women and children used as forced labour, playing a vital but largely

unacknowledged role in the development of the Queensland pastoral industry.

Similar “protection” laws were not repealed until the 1970s.

Their wages, apart from “pocket money”, were sent directly to the government and [much of it was lost or stolen](#).

This kind of [genocide](#) generates a lot of official paperwork, which is preserved in the Queensland Government archives.

The overseer of this system was the Chief Protector of Aboriginals and his records carefully document the lives of each Aboriginal person under his control.

No detail was too small. Where would she live? Where would he be sent to work? How much would they be paid? How much of those wages would be withheld?

Would she be granted leave to marry her sweetheart? Would their children be taken away? Who was pregnant? Who was the father? Who wanted a new dress? Who was pleading to see family? Would they be allowed to go

It's a record so precise and detailed, it took less than two hours for Kathy Frankland, a government archivist who specialises in Indigenous community and personal histories, to find the names of the women in the photo.

Their details were recorded on a single, yellowing typewritten page, titled “List of all Aboriginal or Half Caste females employed in the Longreach District”, April 5, 1920.

Scanning the list of a dozen names there was Effie, 18, Limerick, 56 and Grace, just 12.

Then, the names of the two women employed by my great-grandfather, Henry White, at White Hill station.

“Angelina, Aboriginal, married, 41” — and the laughing girl, “Maria Koosney, half-caste, single, 21”.

Read More:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-06/an-australian-familys-reckoning/13124732?fbclid=IwAR1ogK0pAkO1zfe4CDAmON3UspFI3yr0D-h9a_m7QU5mpNu1E65M2cxFYLM&nw=0

On this Day

National Apology to the Stolen Generations

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, 13 February 2008

**“
For the pain,
suffering and hurt
of the **stolen
generation**, their
descendants and
for their families
left behind, **we say
sorry.**”**

Authorised by Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, ALP NT

Photograph: Stefan Postles/AAP Image



Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann at her home in Nauiyu, Daly River, in the Northern Territory.(ABC Darwin: Amy Spear)

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann shares Stolen Generations story on anniversary of National Apology

Chelsea Heaney, www.abc.net.au, 13th February 2021

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann was just a child when her two-year-old sister Pilawuk White was abruptly taken — but she was too young at the time to understand what had happened.

Key points:

- Dr Ungunmerr-Baumann's sister was forcibly removed from her family under assimilationist policies
- It took more than a decade and an unlikely letter before the family was reunited again
- The Senior Australian of the Year is calling for governments to listen to members of the Stolen Generations

The 2021 Senior Australian of the Year wouldn't see her sister again for another 14 years.

"She was snatched from her mum's lap, where we were on the farm. That was about the time the missionaries came in," Dr Ungunmerr-Baumann said.

"I was too young to realise what all this meant."

Pilawuk was taken from Daly River to the Garden Point Mission on Melville Island, before being sent to Adelaide and adopted by a non-Aboriginal family.

Dr Ungunmerr-Baumann searched for information about what had happened to her sister.

"I was curious about it all and wanted to know why and where my sister was taken," she said.

"I found out that not only my sister but many other children also were taken from our community.

"Through people talking around the community, I learned that Pilawuk was taken for having a white father and was put with a white family to have a better life. Did she?"

Dr Ungunmerr-Baumann shared her story ahead of the 13-year anniversary of

the historic National Apology to the Stolen Generations, and called for compensation for victims in the Northern Territory.

"Although a formal apology has been made, the Commonwealth has refused to pay compensation to members of the Stolen Generations in the Northern Territory, despite their own recommendations to do so," she said.

"All other states with similar policies have paid compensation to those affected.

"They need to be compensated because of the trauma that family, like myself and others, have by having the government take our children away.

"It's not just with me; it'll be with my grandkids. It is with my sister who was taken away, her children and their children. It is just going to continue."

Read More:

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-13/stolen-generation-miriam-rose-senior-australian-of-the-year/13149648?utm_medium=social&utm_content=sf242958814&utm_campaign=fb_abc_news&utm_source=m.facebook.com&sf242958814=1&fbclid=IwAR1-V24TCb1gALR5WpoywG6dm3F09Awg75j0mspBomDtWvwMzWy9gb2mOqc



Ali sits with his siblings Abdulrahman and Mohammad. Ali and his father had travelled with smugglers to Australia in the hopes of bringing the rest of the family later. But with the help of the United Nations, they were reunited in Canada. (Submitted by Ali Kharsa)

When we were separated fleeing Syria, I feared I'd never see my

family again. But now we are safe in Montreal

Ali Kharsa reflects on the long, hard journey that brought him to Canada 5 years ago

Ali Kharsa, CBC News, 9th February 2021

Before the civil war started In Syria, I was living a happy and a peaceful life In the city of Aleppo.

My mother used to wake me up every morning to go to school, I used to spend my day with friends and my big family. My life was pretty average and simple — until the war came and turned that peace and quiet into a hideous voice, when the city was filled with the sounds of bullets and explosions.

I was 13 years old in 2011, when my family decided to flee Syria and seek safety in Malaysia. My parents thought that the war was going to be over in a couple of months, but sadly we lost hope and it started seeming endless. Our passports expired, so we ended up claiming refuge for a protection paper to be able to walk around in the capital city, Kuala Lumpur.

Life was hard. My parents had difficulty finding jobs and my siblings weren't able to go to school. My father and I decided to leave for Australia by boat. Our plan was to get to Australia and have the rest of the family join us. The sacrifice was all for the family's future and safety.

In 2012, my father paid smugglers to help us cross to Indonesia. I remember seeing my baby brother crying at the door when we left. What was truly awful was not knowing if we were ever coming back again; I felt like the sea couldn't be trusted. I never knew my fate with my journey, but all I knew was that the sea might swallow us — or might take us to our destination.

We crossed to Indonesia by foot at night and walked a lot. I can only remember that I put my life on the line, knowing that anything could happen to me in the forest. In the morning, we reached the street and a car picked us up. It took us to a cottage to hide until the boat was ready for us to go. We stayed in Indonesia, hiding, for two months.

We boarded with 67 other people. The boat was made out of wood; it looked more like a fisherman's boat that fits not more than 10 people. Our horrific journey really started when the boat started sailing.

I was so dizzy in the boat I couldn't eat or drink. My skin was peeling off because of the hot sun and the saltwater. It took us five days to arrive in Australia, and then the border force caught us.

They took us into Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre and informed us that we will be transferred to Nauru Island. They told us we were lucky to go there.

We only stayed in Australia for a week, then they moved us by plane to Nauru Island. When I arrived there with my dad, the island looked like a third-world country, more like the villages that I crossed in Indonesia.

We landed and from there we went on a bus to the detention centre; it was surrounded with fences and filled up with families. It was dusty and the accommodations were tents and a few caravans.

I was so stressed and sad, I didn't know what to do. I was lost, thinking I might be stuck here with my dad, never to see my family again.

Read More:

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/syrian-refugee-ali-kharsa-malaysia-nauru-island-canada-1.5902296?fbclid=IwAR31VDN-qKyx2euwe1gzyY0a3LMXq8_7K1q7RWY_SF-GO-3IIQnw4_CX3PY



(Image: AAP/James Ross)

Biloela family wins another reprieve, but full release remains a pipedream

The Morrison government will not take yes for an answer.

Kishor Napier-Raman, Crikey.Daily, February 16th 2021

After more than 1000 days in immigration detention, a Tamil family who lived in central Queensland has won another legal battle in its fight against attempts by the government to deport the father, mother and two young daughters to Sri Lanka.

The full bench of the Federal Court ruled this morning that Tharunicaa Murugappan, the younger Australian-born daughter of Priya and Nades, had been denied procedural fairness by the government when assessing her visa application in 2019.

The judgment upheld Justice Mark Moshinsky's decision in April last year in which he held that Immigration Minister David Coleman had denied Tharunicaa procedural fairness by failing to consider a brief prepared by the Home Affairs Department directing him to "lift the bar" and consider her visa application.

Despite being born in Australia, Tharunicaa has the same visa status as her parents — who arrived by boat and are therefore barred from obtaining a visa. However, the immigration minister has the power to "lift the bar" and approve her visa.

Lawyers for the Murugappan family say they are assessing whether an injunction or stay of orders will be required to stop further deportation attempts by the government.

"We will be reviewing the decision and considering appealing to the High Court, and unless the minister provides an undertaking not to remove, we will apply for an injunction," lawyer Carina Ford said.

"We also think this justifies the release of the family from detention."

Read More:

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2021/02/16/biloela-family-reprieve-full-release->



Our PM needs to act

Refugee Council of Australia 8th February 2021

Statement by Paul Power CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia

Our Prime Minister should follow the powerful example set by US President Joe Biden and recognise that humanitarianism is a core value at the centre of any decent developed democracy.

President Biden announced on Thursday that he will sign an executive order to rebuild the US refugee resettlement program, raising the annual cap on admissions to 125,000, starting in October.

In contrast, the Morrison Government has recently cut Australia's annual refugee intake from 18,750, down to 2013 levels of 13,750.

Despite combatting an enormous and tragic situation with COVID infections and deaths in the USA, President Biden has highlighted that humanitarianism is a core American value. He recognises the shared global responsibility to support refugees, including through expanding resettlement.

But humanitarianism is also an Australian value.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison needs to show leadership, to also acknowledge these

shared values, and consequently reverse his recent cuts to Australia's resettlement program.

Last week UNHCR revealed that the world had only resettled 22,770 refugees in 2020 – the lowest number of refugees in nearly two decades, despite record levels of forced displacement. This was largely due to the impact of COVID-19.

President Biden's announcement shows that even during a pandemic, we can continue to show solidarity with refugees and ensure that those who need it most can find safety.

Australia's successful management of the COVID-19 virus puts us in an even stronger position to do more to help refugees than most nations worldwide, including the USA which is struggling incredibly with the COVID pandemic.

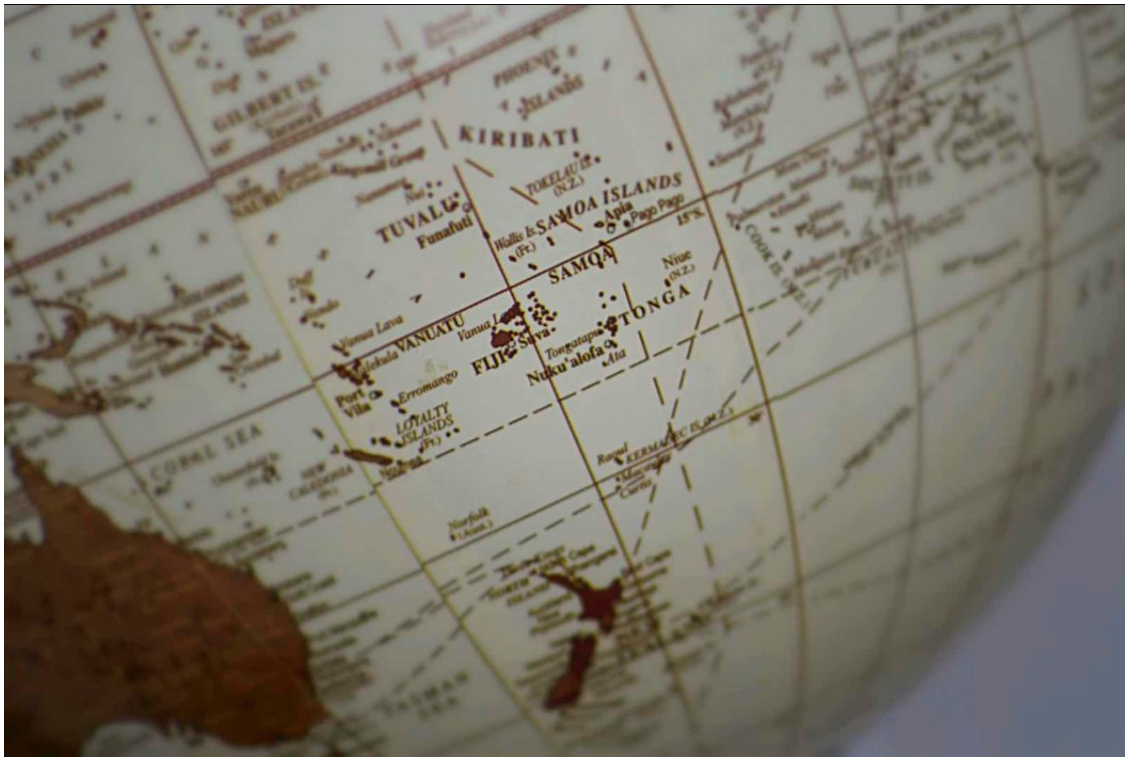
We also welcome the news that the US will look to introducing a sponsorship program to enable American community members to be more involved in the settlement of refugees.

Australia is now falling behind also in this area, as many other countries move to adopt refugee community sponsorship programs. We hope President Biden's example spurs on Australia to reconsider its current policies of sponsorship.

For further comment or to arrange an interview:

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/our-pm-needs-to-act/>





What next for Pacific regionalism?

Jonathan Pryke, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, 10th February 2021

The achievements of the Pacific Islands Forum should not be missed amid the rancour. There is still a chance for repair.

It has been a disastrous week for Pacific regionalism. The controversial appointment of Henry Puna as Secretary General in a 9-8 vote in last week's special Leaders Meeting has splintered the Pacific Islands Forum, with five Micronesian states following through on their threat to leave the Forum if their candidate wasn't appointed. Further complicating matters, Fiji appears to have used the distraction of the meeting to swoop in and deport University of South Pacific Vice Chancellor Pal Ahluwalia.

The result of these moves is a region more bitterly divided than at any time in recent history. The North is angry with the South. Everyone is angry at Fiji. Australia and New Zealand are copping it for doing too much – or not enough – depending on whom you talk to. Until temperatures can cool, Pacific regionalism is going to be at best in hibernation and at worst on life support.

Why does this all matter? What can be done to extract the region from the aftermath of this avoidable crisis and hopefully bring Micronesia back into the fold?

The Pacific Islands Forum is the region's leading political and economic multilateral organisation, responsible for enabling cooperation and collaboration within its member states, and between its member states and the rest of the world. The Forum can be maligned for being a schedule of endless meetings and wasted bureaucracy, delivering bland communiqués that do little to guide domestic policy.

Such criticisms obscure and discredit the marked achievements the Forum has made in its 50-year history on a range of issues including nuclear testing and non-proliferation, regional security, fisheries management and climate change. Through its priority on finding consensus agreement, the region has been able to speak globally on these issues with a vastly outsized voice.

The Forum has also made great strides in reshaping perceptions of the region. Through the regionally adopted “Blue Pacific” narrative, Pacific nations are assertively reshaping the image of the region from one of remoteness and fragility to being resilient custodians of a vast ocean continent.

Through its priority on finding consensus agreement, the region has been able to speak globally on a range of issues with a vastly outsized voice.

There are far deeper intangibles to Pacific regionalism enshrined in the Forum. The Forum embodies many of the values of “Talanoa” – storytelling that leads to consensus-building and decision-making – something that is deeply enshrined in many Pacific cultures. The idea of the Forum helps to nurture threads of cultural connection and shared identity that are felt deeply in all corners of the Pacific from Niue to Nauru. For many nations, the first step was independence and the second was joining the Forum on the path to sovereignty and agency.

It is for all these reasons that the Forum matters for the Pacific, and for Australia.

Read More:

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/what-next-pacific-regionalism>

REFLECTIONS



Pace e Bene Daily Non-violence Inspirations

Saturday February 6, 2021

"During the darkest periods of history, quite often a small number of men and women, scattered throughout the world, have been able to reverse the course of historical evolutions. This was only possible because they hoped beyond all hope. What had been bound for disintegration then entered into the current of a new dynamism." Roger Schutz, Prior of Taizé



Maya Angelou

"The breezes of the West African night were intimate and shy, licking the hair, sweeping through cotton dresses with unseemly intimacy, then disappearing into the utter blackness. Daylight was equally insistent, but much more bold and thoughtless. It dazzled, muddling the sight. It forced through my closed eyelids, bringing me up and out of a borrowed bed and

into brand new streets.

After living nearly two years in Cairo, I had brought my son Guy to enter the University of Ghana in Accra. I planned staying for two weeks with a friend of a colleague, settling Guy into his dormitory, then continuing to Liberia to a job with the Department of Information.

Guy was seventeen and quick. I was thirty-three and determined. We were Black Americans in West Africa, where for the first time in our lives the color of our skin was accepted as correct and normal."

[#MayaAngelou](#), excerpt from *"All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes"*.



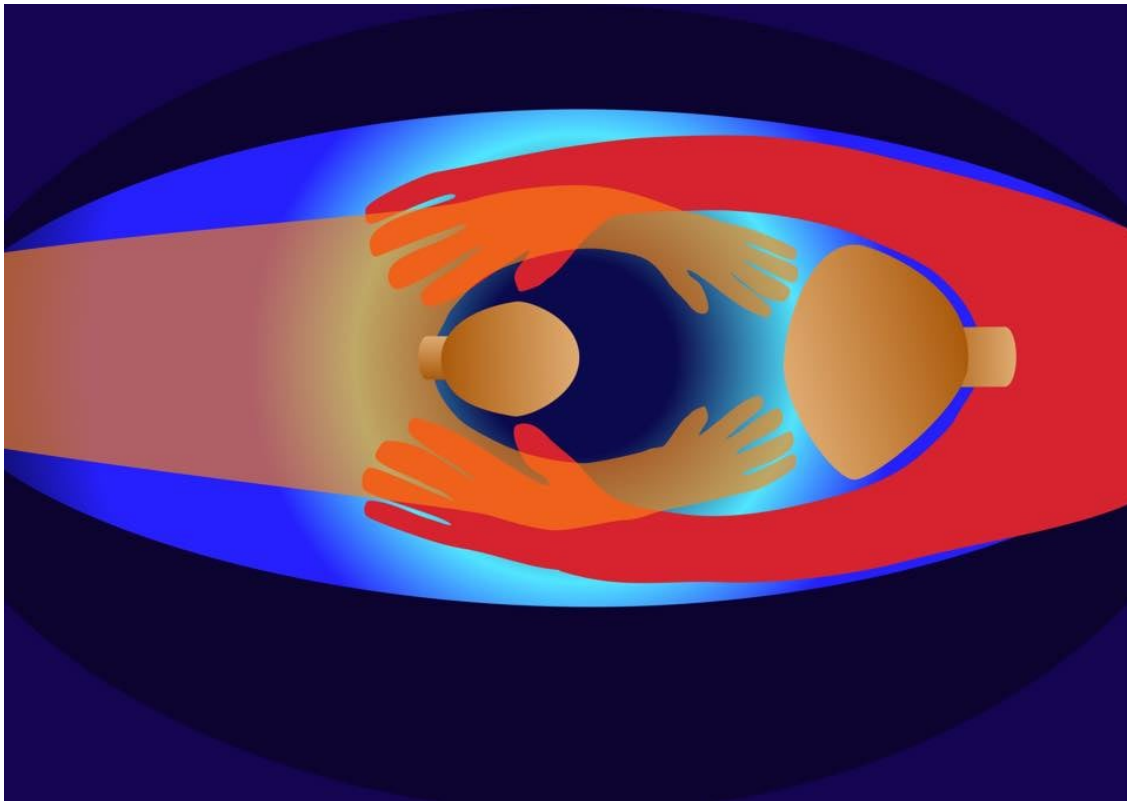


Image - Susan Daily ibvm

Jamberoo Abbey Facebook Post

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time and Valentine's Day

"Of course I want to!" said Jesus, "Be cured" Mark 1:42

There is a beautiful cross-over between today's Gospel and the feast of love which many celebrate today. Mark's Gospel tells the story of Jesus' love and compassion for the leper, not only agreeing to cure him, but also reaching out and touching him.

John O'Donohue has this to say about love:

"There is a lovely idea in the Celtic tradition that if you send out goodness from yourself, or if you share that which is happy or good within you, it will all come back to you multiplied ten thousand times. In the kingdom of love there is no competition, there is no possessiveness or control. The more love you give away, the more love you will have."

On this double feast, may we celebrate the "kingdom of love" Jesus invites us to inhabit, and those whose love surrounds and enriches our lives each and every day.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.

Our mailing address is:

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